

Message Text

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 DAMASCUS 1295

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PERP SY US XF
SUBJ: MARCH 5 BRIEFING OF FONMIN KHADDAM ABOUT PEACE PROCESS

SUMMARY: BRIEFED KHADDAM MARCH 5 ON PEACE PROCESS, USING TALKING POINTS AGREED ON WITH ATHERTON IN AMMAN. FONMIN EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR BEING KEPT INFORMED. HE ASKED ABOUT JORDANIAN REACTION. SAID I NOT YET INFORMED BUT KNEW WE WERE NOT TRYING TO PRESSURE HUSSEIN. HE THEN REITERATED SYRIAN POSITION THAT POLITICAL EFFORTS DERIVING FROM JERUSALEM VISIT ARE NOT SERVING CAUSE OF PEACE. USG SHOULD NOT TRY TO DEVELOP NEW GUIDELINES BUT RATHER RETURN TO THOSE IN UN CHARTER AND EXISTING RESOLUTIONS, MENTIONING IN PARTICULAR UNGA 3236. ASSERTED NO OTHER PARTIES WOULD BE BOUND BY DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES WORKED OUT BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL. WASHINGTON ALSO SHOULD CUT OFF ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO ISRAEL UNTIL LATTER DRASTICALLY REVISES ITS POLICIES. REPLIED IF HE LOOKING FOR EVIDENCE OF OUR BONA FIDES IN CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS HE SHOULD CONSIDER OUR POSITION ON SETTLEMENTS, OUR PRESENTATION TO CONGRESS OF PROPOSED AIRCRAFT SALES TO EGYPT, ISRAEL AND SAUDI ARABIA AS A PACKAGE AND EXTENT TO WHICH WE NOT REPEAT NOT RESPONDING TO ISRAELI F-16 REQUESTS. ACCEPTANCE BY ISRAEL OF DECLARATION WHICH WE ARE TRYING TO HELP WORK OUT WOULD IN ITSELF BE A MAJOR POSITIVE STEP FORWARD. END SUMMARY.

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1. AFTER RETURNING FROM MARCH 3-4 DISCUSSIONS ABOUT PEACE PROCESS WITH ATHERTON IN AMMAN, I BRIEFED FONMIN KHADDAM EVENING MARCH 5 FOR ONE HOUR. SAID THAT ATHERTON SENT HIS GREETINGS AND THEN MADE THE FOLLOWING TALKING POINTS AS AGREED UPON WITH ATHERTON.

2. WE REGRETTED SYRIA HAD FELT IT IMPOSSIBLE TO RECEIVE
ATHERTON. WE RESPECTED ITS POSITION AND HAD AVOIDED
STIMULATING DISCUSSION ABOUT FUTURE SYRIAN CONTACTS WITH HIM
IN OUR DEALINGS WITH THE PRESS. SAID OUR EYES REMAINED FIXED
ON THE OBJECTIVE OF A COMPREHENSIVE PEACE SETTLEMENT INVOLVING
ALL FRONTS. WE REGRETTED THAT OUR EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE THIS
OBJECTIVE DIRECTLY THROUGH GENEVA HAD NOT WORKED OUT. ALTHOUGH
THERE HAS BEEN A CHANGE IN ROUTE TOWARDS THIS OBJECTIVE, OUR
GOAL REMAINS UNCHANGED. WE ARE FOCUSSED ON TRYING TO
DEVELOP A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES WHICH ESSENTIALLY
WOULD ADD ONE ELEMENT TO THE BASIC FRAMEWORK ON UN RESES
242-338: PROVISION OF A PALESTINIAN DIMENSION IN THE
NEGOTIATIONS AND FINAL SETTLEMENT. THAT REMAINS THE
MOST DIFFICULT ISSUE. WE ARE WORKING TO BRING THE
ISRAELIS TO ACCEPT A MORE FORTHCOMING LANGUAGE, SUCH AS
PRESIDENT CARTER'S ASWAN FORMULATION, TO PROVIDE FOR
PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION IN DETERMINING THEIR OWN FUTURE.
IN THIS PROCESS, REALISTICALLY WE CANNOT IGNORE THE
INTERESTS OF OTHERS IN ADDITION TO THE PALESTINIANS,
I.E., JORDAN, EGYPT AND OF COURSE ISRAEL AS THE OCCUPYING POWER.
BY OUR PUBLIC STRESS ON THE NEED TO DEAL WITH "THE PALESTINIAN
ISSUE IN ALL ITS ASPECTS," WE ARE ACKNOWLEDGING THE NEED
TO DEAL WITH PALESTINIAN REFUGEES OUTSIDE WEST BANK/GAZA.
OUR HOPE IS TO SECURE A BASIC FRAMEWORK WHICH WILL ULTIMATELY
BE ACCEPTED FOR NEGOTIATIONS ENCOMPASSING THE PALESTINIANS
AND ALL CONFRONTATION STATES.

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EM NEITHER WE NOR THE EGYPTIANS ARE TALKING
ABOUT A BILATERAL SETTLEMENT. WERE THAT THE OBJECTIVE,
IT WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE QUICKLY AND MORE EASILY REALIZED.
BECAUSE WE AND SADAT SEE THE PROCESS AS HAVING TO INVOLVE
OTHER PARTIES, OUR WORK IS MORE COMPLEX. THERE IS A
MAJOR DEBATE UNDER WAY IN ISRAEL AS EVIDENCED BY
BEGIN'S WILLINGNESS TO AFFIRM ISRAELI READINESS
TO RETURN TO THE INTERNATIONAL BORDERS IN SINAI
AND TO END MILITARY GOVERNMENT IN WEST BANK. ALTHOUGH WE
CONSIDER BEGIN'S "SELF-RULE" PLAN UNSATISFACTORY, THAT PLAN
IS NEVERTHELESS INDICATIVE OF THE AMOUNT OF RETHINKING UNDER
WAY IN ISRAEL.

4. CONTINUED THAT WE CONSIDER BEGIN MUST CONFRONT THE
QUESTION OF ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM WEST BANK/GAZA, SEE THE
PALESTINIAN PROBLEM AS A POLITICAL ONE AND NOT JUST
SEEK A WAY TO PERPETUATE CONTINUED ISRAELI OCCUPATION
UNDER ANOTHER FORM. THE NEXT IMPORTANT STEP IN
NARROWING DIFFERENCES WILL BE BEGIN'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON.
WE WILL BE DISCUSSING TWO MAJOR ISSUES WITH HIM: THAT
THE PRINCIPLE OF WITHDRAWAL IN 242 APPLIES TO WEST BANK/

GAZA AND THAT SOLUTION TO THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM
MUST BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS.
WE DO NOT THINK AN INDEPENDENT STATE FOR THE PALESTINIANS
IS THE BEST ANSWER EITHER FOR THAT PROBLEM OR FOR THE
REGION BUT WE DEFINITELY ACCEPT THE PREMISE
THAT THE PALESTINIANS MUST HAVE A VOICE IN THIS
PROCESS.

5. AFFIRMED THAT WE ARE NOT JUST REPEATING OLD FORMULAE
TO THE ISRAELIS. WE ARE ENGAGED IN A PROCESS WHICH IS CAUSING
THING TO HAPPEN. HOWEVER, A TIME BUFFER WILL BE NEEDED
AND NO ONE SHOULD ANTICIPATE BEING ABLE TO MOVE DIRECTLY
FROM THE PRESENT ISRAELI OCCUPATION TO A FINAL
SOLUTION FOR WEST BANK/GAZA. AS A GENERAL COMMENT,
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SAID THAT WE DO NOT ASSUME THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES
WILL SOLVE ALL PROBLEMS, BUT DO BELIEVE IT WILL
GIVE A NEW BASIS ON WHICH TO BUILD. PREDICTABLY, THE DOCUMENT
WILL NOT BE AS FAR REACHING AS SOME HAD
HOPED FOR BUT IT WILL DEFINITELY NOT BE THE BLAND
REHASH WHICH ISRAELIS WOULD PREFER. WE MAINTAIN
THE DECLARATION MUST INCLUDE A DEFINITE ADVANCE IN FORMULATING
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS.

6. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE QUESTION IS THE ARAB COMMITMENT
TO PEACE. THE REASON WE ARE READY TO MAKE AN EFFORT FOR PEACE
AND WORK FOR WHAT IS JUST FOR THE ARABS IS BASED ON OUR
ASSUMPTION THAT THE RESULTS OF THIS PROCESS WILL INCLUDE ARAB
RECOGNITION OF WHAT IS JUST FOR ISRAEL. CONCLUDED THAT WE ARE
EN ROUTE TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT AND WE HOPE THAT
SYRIA WILL KEEP AN OPEN MIND CONCERNING BOTH OUR EFFORTS AND
THE OVERALL PROCESS.

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7. AFTER MAKING ABOVE TALKING POINTS, SAID I WOULD BE HAPPY TO TRY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS. KHADDAM ASKED WHAT HUSSEIN'S REACTION HAD BEEN TO AHERTON'S PRESENTATION. I EXPLAINED THAT I HAD LEFT AMMAN BEFORE AHERTON-HUSSEIN MEETING, INDEED BEFORE HIS MEETING SCHEDULED FOR MORNING MARCH 4 WITH SHARAF. I KNEW AHERTON INTENDED TO GIVE HUSSEIN THE MOST REALISTIC AND SOUNDLY-BASED ASSESSMENT POSSIBLE OF WHAT WE CONSIDER ACHIEVABLE AT CURRENT STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS AND TO SOLICIT HUSSEIN'S OWN READING. HE DID NOT INTEND TO PRESSURE THE KING.

8. KHADDAM THEN COMMENTED SYRIA REMAINED CONVINCED THAT THE ROUND OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY WHICH BEGAN WITH SADAT'S VISIT WAS NOT SERVING THE INTERESTS OF PEACE AND COULD NOT HAVE POSITIVE RESULTS. SADAT HAD ALREADY MADE TOO MANY CONCESSIONS TO THE ISRAELIS AND DISREGARDED UN RESOLUTIONS. ANY AGREEMENT BETWEEN SADAT AND THE ISRAELIS WHICH AHERTON MIGHT HELP ARRANGE WOULD HAVE NO BINDING FORCE OVER THE PALESTINIANS, SYRIANS OR OTHER ARABS. HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND, KHADDAM CONTINUED, WHY AHERTON PERSISTED IN TRYING TO REACH A NEW DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES. ALL NECESSARY GUIDELINES ARE CONTAINED IN THE UN CHARTER AND VARIOUS UN RESOLUTIONS. FOR ITS PART, SYRIA WILL NOT FORESAKE EITHER THE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIANS OR SYRIA'S NATIONAL RIGHTS. NOR WILL THE ARABS GO
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LIGHTLY ON ANY POLITICIAN WHO TRIES TO HARM EITHER PALESTINIAN RIGHTS OR THOSE OF THE ARAB STATES VIS-A-VIS THEIR OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. WASHINGTON'S BEST COURSE OF ACTION WOULD BE TO DECLARE ITS INTENTION TO RETURN TO THE "INTERNATIONAL LEGITIMACY OF THE UN CHARTER AND THE APPLICABLE RESOLUTIONS, IN PARTICULAR UNGA 3236 AND OTHERS DEALING WITH WITHDRAWAL." USG SHOULD ALSO CUT OFF ALL AID TO ISRAEL UNTIL JERUSALEM FUNDAMENTALLY RECONSIDERS ITS AGGRESSIVE AND EXPANSIONIST POLICY. IT IS A SIMPLE FACT, KHADDAM REITERATED, THAT NO ARAB PARTY IS COMPELLED TO ACCEPT EITHER BEGIN'S CONDITIONS OR SADAT'S CAPITULATORY ACTIONS. HE ADDED THAT HE NONETHELESS APPRECIATED AHERTON'S INITIATIVE IN KEEPING SYRIA INFORMED ABOUT HIS CONTACTS "DESPITE FACT THAT SYRIA IS NOT CONCERNED WITH THOSE CONTACTS."

9. REPLIED I KNEW I DID NOT HAVE TO JUSTIFY TO FONMIN CURRENT US DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY. KHADDAM WAS AWARE THAT BEGIN WAS RE-INTERPRETING THE MEANING OF RESOLUTION 242 IN ASSERTING IT DID NOT APPLY TO THE WEST BANK. THIS WAS ONLY ONE OF SEVERAL DEVELOPMENTS MOTIVATING ATHERTON'S CURRENT EFFORTS. ON THE OTHER HAND, OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL IS INTIMATE AND COMPLEX, AND I WAS SURE THE FONMIN DID NOT SERIOUSLY EXPECT WASHINGTON TO ACCEPT HIS RECOMMENDATIONS TO SEVER US ECONOMIC AND MILITARY RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL. IF, HOWEVER, HE WAS LOOKING FOR SOME EVIDENCE OF OUR BONA FIDES IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS HE SHOULD TAKE NOTE FIRST OF ALL OF OUR POSITION ON SETTLEMENTS. (CITED THE WEITZMAN/SHARON SPLIT OVER THIS ISSUE, NOTING WE HAD URGED GOI TO FREEZE ALL SUCH ACTIVITY. THE STRENGTH OF OUR ARGUMENTS HAD A LEAST HELPED BRING ABOUT A CUTBACK IN SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY.) RE OUR ARMS SUPPLY TO ISRAEL, I TRUSTED THE MINISTER RECOGNIZED THE SIGNIFICANCE OF OUR PRESENTATION
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TO THE US CONGRESS, IN INSISTING THAT PROPOSED SALES TO ISRAEL, SAUD ARAB AND EGYPT CONSTITUTED A PACKAGE. THE LINKAGE OF THESE SALES WAS UNPRECEDENTED AND HAD CAUSED CONSIDERABLE UNEASINESS IN ISRAEL. FURTHERMORE, WE HAVE CUT BACK DEEPLY THE NUMBER OF F16S ISRAEL HAS SOUGHT AND HAVE REFUSED CO-PRODUCTION RIGHTS.

10. THE FONMIN COMMENTED THAT HE RECOGNIZED WASHINGTON'S PROBLEM DATED FROM ITS AGREEMENT TO THE SECRET ANNEXES OF SINAI II WHICH HANDCUFFED US TO A POLICY OF PROVIDING ISRAEL WITH THE LATEST WEAPONRY. BUT, HE MAINTAINED, IT WILL BE DIFFICULT FOR THE US TO ACHIEVE PRACTICAL RESULTS IF IT CONTINUES TO WORK OUTSIDE THE FRAMEWORK OF UN RESOLUTIONS. NO ONE ACCEPTS THAT US, EGYPT AND ISRAEL CAN DECIDE THE FATE OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE IN THE ABSENCE OF THEIR LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE, THE PLO. IT IS EQUALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR WASHINGTON, CAIRO AND JERUSALEM TO DECIDE THE FATE OF OTHER ARAB TERRITORIES. I INTERJECTED THAT WE HAD NEVER ARROGATED TO OURSELVES THE RIGHT TO DECIDE THE FATE OF THE PALESTINIANS, ANY MORE THAN EGYPT WAS PREPARED TO NEGOTIATE SPECIFICS CONCERNING THE GOLAN HEIGHTS. THIS WAS NOT THE POINT OF THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES. KHADDAM COUNTERED THAT THE PRESENT DISCUSSIONS, ASSUMING THEY PRODUCE AN AGREED DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, CAN AT BEST ONLY SERVE TO FREEZE THE EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI STRUGGLE. SINCE THIS COULD BE ONLY A TEMPORARY ARRANGEMENT, IT WILL NOT SERVE PEACE. "THE EGYPTIAN PEOPLE WILL ADHERE TO THEIR NATIONAL DIGNITY AND NATIONAL OBLIGATIONS." SAID I FELT THAT KHADDAM WAS PERSISTING IN MISUNDERSTANDING OUR EFFORTS ON

BEHALF OF A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES. WE INTENDED
THIS TO BE A DYNAMIC OPENING FOR FUTURE COMPREHENSIVE
NEGOTIATIONS. WE ARE NOT AIMING AT LIMITING
THE PARTICIPANTS; BUT THE REALITY IS THAT WE CAN ONLY
WORK WITH THOSE FORCES AND THOSE LEADERS THAT ACCEPT
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THE NEED TO MOVE AND TO DO SO NOW.

11. FONMIN REITERATED THAT THE DECLARATION CANNOT BE
BINDING ON ANY PARTY. I REPLIED THAT IF ISRAEL
ACCEPTS THE DECLARATION THIS IN ITSELF WILL BE A
MAJOR AND POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT. KHADDAM THEN RECALLED
A FAVORITE THEME OF ASSAD'S THAT THE ARAB STATES AND PALESTIN-
IANS WILL NOT BEG FOR THEIR NATIONAL RIGHTS FROM ANYONE.
I SAID WE WERE NOT TRYING TO MAKE A BEGGER OUT OF
ANYONE. AS FAR AS FREEZING A RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL,
THIS WAS A LUXURY THAT PERPHAPS DAMASCUS COULD FOR A
PERIOD ENJOY BUT WE WILL ALWAYS DEAL WITH THE
LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT INVOLVED WHICH HAPPENED AT PRESENT TO
BE BEGIN'S. KHADDAM DROPPED THE SUBJECT AT THIS POINT SAYING,
"WELL, IN ANY CASE THIS IS A MATTER BETWEEN AERICA AND
ISRAEL." I SAID THAT WE CONSIDERED SYRIA ONE DAY WILL
BENEFIT FROM OUR EFFORTS. ADDED THAT I HOPED SYRIA'S
WASHINGTON EMBASSY AND HIS STAFF IN THE MINISTRY WERE
KEEPING HIM ABREST OF THE LATEST US PUBLIC
OPINION SURVEYS CONCERNING MIDDLE EAST ISSUES. THERE
HAD BEEN A DRAMITIC SWING IN THE POLLS FROM THOSE
CONDUCTED BEFORE AND THOSE HELD AFTER THE JERUSALEM
VISIT. THE DIRECTION IS CRITICAL OF ISRAEL. KHADDAM
REPLIED THAT HE WAS AWARE OF POLLS BUT MADE NO SUBSTANTIVE
COMMENT.

12. COMMENT: KHADDAM'S POSITIONS WERE FAMILIAR BOILER-
PLATE. HIS REACTION TO PRESENTATION WAS, HOWEVER, FRIENDLY
AND, BY SYRIAN STANDARDS, NON-POLEMICAL. I CONSIDER THIS
EXERCISE OF STAYING IN TOUCH WELL WORTHWHILE. HE DIRECTED
THE NOTETAKE TO STAY BEHIND AFTEWARDS TO PREPARE A
TEXT FOR IMMEDIATE DELIVERY TO ASSAD.

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